

# The Medical Waste Reporter



## Announcements for Wisconsin's Medical Waste Generators

Reporting year 2005

Issued January 2006

### Coming in 2006: Healthcare Waste Reduction Workshops

Wisconsin healthcare facilities will be able to network on waste reduction in 2006. Workshops will be offered on mercury reduction, hazardous waste (including chemo and pharmaceutical waste), waste segregation and recycling.

A survey indicated that most contacts would attend quarterly workshops within 1-2 hours drive. More than 4 workshops are planned in 2006 due to their regulatory focus. Future workshops may cover topics like green purchasing and healthy food.

So far, we have set these dates, topics, and locations (TBA means To Be Arranged):

**March 7**, Mercury reduction, Elkhorn  
**March 9**, Mercury reduction, Appleton  
**Spring TBA**, Hazardous waste, Nor. WI TBA  
**June 15**, Hazardous waste, Richland Center  
**July 27**, Hazardous waste, Sheboygan  
**October TBA**, Waste segregation, Madison  
**TBA**, Waste segregation, Northern WI TBA

To receive e-mail announcements about these workshops, see article in next column.

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### H2E Award Winners in 2005

Two Wisconsin Hospitals earned Hospitals for a Healthy Environment\* Awards in 2005.

**Waukesha Medical Center**, Waukesha, and **Tomah Memorial Hospital**, Tomah, each earned the Making Medicine Mercury Free award. Congratulations!

Any Wisconsin hospital, clinic or nursing home with a medical waste reduction plan easily qualifies for one or more of the H2E awards. All H2E Partners are especially encouraged to apply. For information and application forms, visit [www.h2e-online.org](http://www.h2e-online.org).

**Applications  
for the 2006  
H2E awards  
must be rec'd  
by 2/10/06**

The national awards will be given out in April at the CleanMed conference in Seattle. See [www.cleanmed.org](http://www.cleanmed.org).

\* H2E is a collaborative effort of the Am. Hospital Assoc., the US Environmental Protection Agency, Health Care Without Harm, the Am. Nurses Assoc. and many others.

### Welcome New H2E Partners!

Medical facilities that joined H2E in 2005 include **Gundersen Lutheran Health System**, with more than 40 affiliates in Wisconsin, Iowa & Minnesota, and **Ripon Medical Center**, Ripon. Wisconsin now has 38 H2E Partners representing over 160 affiliated facilities. Join us!

### DNR Offers E-mail Announcements

Want to stay abreast of what's happening in medical waste reduction? DNR has an e-mail service for those who submit infectious waste annual reports to the DNR. We send 6-10 messages a month about waste reduction and management, workshops, proposed rule changes, awards, training opportunities, etc. To join the list, contact Barb Bickford (see p. 2 contact box).

## Mercury → Reduction ← News

### Mercury Reduction Workshops

While your bulk mercury items like thermometers might be long gone, you may still have mercury-containing lab reagents, cleaners, switches and other items. If so, plan on coming to a Mercury Reduction Workshop.

The first of three workshops for Wisconsin healthcare facilities was held in Tomah on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The 18 participants learned how two Wisconsin facilities have eliminated mercury, how wastewater rules will impact them, and how H2E can assist in mercury elimination.

The remaining mercury workshops are:

- March 7 in Elkhorn (southeast WI)
- March 9 in Appleton (northeast WI)

**Invitations to these events will be sent by e-mail only**, so if you might want to attend, send your e-mail address to Barb Bickford (see contact box).

### “Model Mercury Elimination Plan”

H2E has written a comprehensive guide to help you assess existing mercury sources, develop action plans to eliminate those sources, and set up an environmentally preferable purchasing plan that will keep your facility mercury-free. Go to [www.h2e-online.org](http://www.h2e-online.org), click on Mercury, then on Mercury Overview and other headings.

#### HOW TO CONTACT DNR STAFF:

##### *Medical waste questions:*

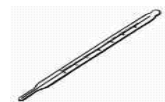
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##### *Mercury questions:*

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**DNR Web site:** [www.dnr.wi.gov](http://www.dnr.wi.gov)

### Mercury Thermometer Collections A Success



In 2004 and 2005, EPA grants enabled health care facilities and communities to collect mercury thermometers. The 39 collection events netted 5951 mercury thermometers, and totaled 590 pounds, including some other mercury items.

### Wastewater Rules for Mercury Begin to Impact Wisconsin Healthcare

Wisconsin municipal wastewater treatment plants, whose permits are being renewed over the next several years, are now asking their customers to limit mercury discharges to very low levels.

Among those who must comply are hospitals and dental offices. Other clinics may also be affected. To find out your facility's deadline, call your local wastewater treatment plant. For general information about Mercury Pollutant Minimization Programs, contact Randy Case (see box this page).

**Hospitals** will need to identify mercury-containing equipment and chemicals and substitute reasonable cost-effective non-mercury devices and chemicals. These are the same criteria for earning the H2E “Making Medicine Mercury Free” award, and if a hospital has earned the H2E award, it can avoid paperwork and expensive effluent monitoring.

**Dental offices** must maximize the amount of mercury captured and recycled, i.e., they will need to follow the American Dental Association's recommendations and install an amalgam separator. Chairside traps and vacuum system filters capture about 50% of the waste amalgam from dental wastewater. Amalgam separators can bring that up to 95% or better.

For more information about dental amalgam separators and other Best Management Practices, go to [www.shwec.uwm.edu](http://www.shwec.uwm.edu); scroll down and click on Wisconsin Dental Mercury Pollution Prevention and review two publications: "Choosing an Amalgam Separator for Your Dental Office", and "Minimizing Dental Mercury Discharges in Metro Milwaukee". Most dental offices work through a dental equipment supplier to identify the best separator for their office.



## Medical Waste Rule Revisions take effect February 1, 2006

Revisions to Wisconsin's medical waste rule, chapter NR 526, Wis. Admin. Code, take effect 2/1/06 along with other solid waste rule revisions.

Based on comments from generators and transporters, the two most important rule changes involve shipping requirements and trace chemotherapy (chemo) waste.

**Shipping requirements:** NR 526 now clarifies that when federal DOT requirements apply, they preempt the similar requirements in NR 526. Therefore, government entities transporting their own wastes and individuals (unless exempt) need only follow NR 526 requirements, while all others need only follow DOT requirements when packing, labeling and manifesting their wastes.

**Trace chemo waste:** While both trace and **bulk** chemo wastes appear to need tighter regulation, the NR 500 rule revisions were only able to deal with trace chemo waste. The revisions clarify the term used for this waste and mandate its separate management. You can either mix trace chemo waste with bulk chemo waste and send it all to a hazardous waste incinerator, or you may separate the two types and send the trace chemo waste to a medical waste incinerator.

**Minor revisions:** Minor revisions dealt with disinfecting reusable sharps containers, updating bag standards, exempting blood collection vehicles, documenting mass vaccination waste, disposing of teeth containing mercury amalgam,

### **Best Management Practices for bulk and mixed chemo waste**

Did you know only about 8 chemotherapy agents are legally considered to be hazardous waste under state and federal hazardous waste rules? Even so, DNR strongly recommends that you manage all bulk and mixed chemo as hazardous waste destined for incineration or other very high temperature destruction. Don't treat these wastes onsite or send them to an infectious waste treatment facility that disinfects waste with chemicals or steam (e.g., autoclave, microwave, radiowave facilities).

clarifying certification of waste treatment, and reporting rates for dialysis clinics.

For general information about the rule package and a link to the rules, go to this website and scroll to the **FAR** bottom for links to documents:

[www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/solid/landfill/500rev/](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/solid/landfill/500rev/)

The link to the Natural Resources Board order is

[www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/solid/landfill/500rev/FinalOrderNR500Strmlning7-15-05.pdf](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/solid/landfill/500rev/FinalOrderNR500Strmlning7-15-05.pdf)

The NR 526 changes start on page 73 of 92.

## Hazardous Waste 101 (HW101)

Ever have dreams of being unprepared for a major test? The same panicked feeling may arise when you are asked to comply with hazardous waste rules. Well, don't panic. Help is on the way.

DNR and others are planning outreach, dubbed "HW101," to Wisconsin's medical facilities. HW101 will be presented at the hazardous waste workshops (see p. 1) and possibly other venues. Topics covered will include generator status, listed and characteristic hazardous waste, universal waste, and common violations found in healthcare. To find out when HW101 is offered, sign up for e-mail announcements (see p. 1).



HW101 is timely because Wisconsin's completely revised hazardous waste rules will go into effect in mid to late 2006. The extensively revised rules will more closely resemble EPA's hazardous waste rules.

Those who can't wait to wade into HW101 are encouraged to visit [www.hercenter.org](http://www.hercenter.org), hold your cursor over the words "hazardous materials" on the brown bar and start wading. Review these a few times and it will begin to make sense. Trust me.

While Wisconsin's revised rules won't be identical to the federal rules, the basic concepts are the same. Guidance on current WI rules is posted at [www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/publications/](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/publications/) Scroll down to "Hazardous waste" and click on the inspection form for your generator status, or "What is hazardous waste?" or "Avoiding common hazardous waste violations".

## Recycle Cancer Drugs



As of July 1, 2005, unused cancer drugs in unit dose packaging can be returned to certain pharmacies for redistribution to other cancer patients. Go to [dhfs.wisconsin.gov/bqaconsumer/cancerdrugrepsy.htm](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/bqaconsumer/cancerdrugrepsy.htm) for more information.

And, contrary to longstanding rumor, pharmacies may take back other drugs, but only for purposes of disposal. However most choose not to, as drugs can be expensive to dispose of properly.

## Annual report backlog shrinks

Lindsey Miller, DNR medical waste file manager, tracked down 220 overdue and incomplete annual reports in 2005, but 57 reports are still outstanding. If you get an infamous "Pink Sheet" with your annual report, please return your reports promptly.

## NEW RESOURCES

To learn about the latest resources throughout the year, join the DNR medical waste e-mail list (see page 1). We continue to recommend **Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E)** at [www.h2e-online.org](http://www.h2e-online.org). This frequently updated site offers an e-mail discussion forum and free monthly teleconferences for health care.

## Compliance Assistance

In 2005, the US EPA opened the **Healthcare Environmental Resource Center**, [www.hercenter.org](http://www.hercenter.org). This site presents basic plain-English information about EPA's environmental regulations & links to state regulations.

Improve your **JCAHO** and other **accreditation** standing by reducing waste! Go to [www.hercenter.org](http://www.hercenter.org). On the brown menu bar, place your cursor over "Regulations and Standards" and click on "JCAHO Standards". Read the whole introduction for hints about using this tool, then click on "Table of Contents" to find out about how what you are already doing can fulfill these standards. You can even print out a checklist similar to what your JCAHO or other accreditation inspector will use.

## Construction & Demolition

Wisconsin's non-profit **Waste Cap** can assist you in recycling construction/deconstruction waste. See [www.wastecapwi.org](http://www.wastecapwi.org)

The **Green Guide for Health Care** integrates enhanced environmental and health principles into the planning, design, construction and operations of health care facilities. Now available in print or download for free at [www.gghc.org](http://www.gghc.org).

## Battery, Vaccine & Sharps Disposal

The UW Extension's Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) has written "Management of Used Batteries: A Fact Sheet for Business Generators." See it at [www3.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/publications/cabinet/pdf/mgmtofusedbatteries.pdf](http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/publications/cabinet/pdf/mgmtofusedbatteries.pdf)

DNR's **vaccine disposal** fact sheet, at [dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/publications/medinf/wa841-05r.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/publications/medinf/wa841-05r.pdf) also discusses basic concepts of hazardous waste disposal.

**Community Options for Safe Needle Disposal** presents options for collecting sharps. Go to [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical/med-govt.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical/med-govt.pdf) See also [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org)

## Laboratories

**Lab Waste Management Guidelines** are posted at [www.govlink.org/hazwaste/publications/LabGuidelines\\_05.pdf](http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/publications/LabGuidelines_05.pdf)

## Healthy Food

The **Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**, a member of Health Care Without Harm, [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org), recently released a report entitled "Healthy Food, Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Communities: Stories of Health Care Leaders Bringing Fresher, Healthier Food Choices to Their Patients, Staff and Communities." Go to [www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/)

These announcements were prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, for distribution with publication PUBL-WA-809-05 (infectious waste annual report form packet) in January 2006. Comments and questions can be directed to Barb Bickford, DNR Medical Waste Coordinator (see contact box on page 2).